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He says clock is running out on many priorities:

DORGAN URGES ACTION ON UNFINISHED CONGRESSIONAL AGENDA FOR STATE AND NATION

(MINOT, NORTH DAKOTA) — U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan Tuesday urged prompt action by Congress on a broad range of issues left unresolved when it adjourned last week for the August break and the national political conventions. Adding a prescription drug benefit to Medicare, allowing the re-importation of lower priced prescription medicines, opening new export markets for farmers, and a number of important North Dakota projects are among the items Congress needs to act on promptly when it returns September 5, he said.

"North Dakotans have a lot at stake in the closing days of the 106th Congress," Dorgan told a meeting of the Minot Kiwanis. "Time is of the essence," he added, "because only 23 legislative days remain" when Congress returns at the end of its August break. The 106th Congress is scheduled to end in early October.

Among the proposals Dorgan urged Congress to address promptly when it returns:

- Medicare prescription drug benefit: Dorgan and other Senate Democrats proposed that all Medicare beneficiaries (103,000 in North Dakota) have the option of affordable Medicare prescription drug coverage, but Senate Republicans are blocking that plan and advancing their own proposal. The GOP plan requires seniors to rely on private insurance companies for such coverage. Most insurance companies do not offer such coverage to seniors and say they can't do so at affordable rates. Lack of access to prescription medicines often creates greater – and more costly – health problems.
- Access to lower priced prescription drugs from other countries: The Senate has approved Dorgan's amendment to allow U.S. pharmacists and prescription drug wholesalers to re-import Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medicines from other countries where they are often sold by U.S. manufacturers at a fraction of the cost charged U.S. consumers. If approved, big pharmaceutical manufacturers who now virtually dictate their own price in the U.S. would, for the first time, face price competition. They are now running a multi-million dollar advertising campaign to de-rail Dorgan's amendment. Congress will decide the question this fall.

- New export markets for farmers: The Senate approved Dorgan's amendment to end unilateral U.S. food and medicine embargoes against Cuba and other nations, and the House voted to cut off funds to enforce those embargoes. Last year, Dorgan's amendment was approved by the Senate, but majority party congressional leaders "high-jacked" it at the last minute, stripping it out of the final version of the bill before it went to the President. They are trying strip Dorgan's amendment out again this year. "Farmers need these markets," Dorgan said. "It is time for this absurdity to end, and I intend to wage a very determined, vigorous effort to prevent them from high-jacking it again."
- Writing a new farm bill: The "Freedom to Farm" program is a "practical and financial disaster" for farmers and the federal government, Dorgan said. "Congress has refused so far to re-write it, but I intend to keep pushing." After repeated refusals by the Senate Agriculture Committee to hold hearings to re-write the troubled farm program, Dorgan chaired a number of hearings by the Senate Democratic Policy Committee (DPC) around the country and in Washington, D.C. to document the need for a new federal farm program.
- North Dakota projects: Numerous projects in North Dakota have won preliminary approval from Senate committees and even the full Senate, but await final action by House-Senate conference committees. Following are some of those projects, and a selection of others awaiting final action:
 - ' Disaster aid: Dorgan and Senator Kent Conrad (D-ND) got \$450 million in disaster aid included in the Agriculture Appropriations bill for farmers suffering weather related disasters, primarily in North Dakota and Minnesota, which have widespread flood damage, and in several southern states hit by drought. Congress has yet to complete final action on the bill, however, and should act quickly to do so, Dorgan said.
 - ' Research and Development at North Dakota universities: As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Dorgan won committee and full Senate approval for numerous research projects at North Dakota State University (NDSU) and the University of North Dakota (UND) in appropriations bills now awaiting final action. Included are studies on alternative crops, alternative fuels and biomass energy, and military research and training programs. Dorgan won substantial boosts for ag research in the state, which he increased by \$5.1 million above the President's original requests.
 - ' Water related projects: The Senate Appropriations Committee approved Dorgan's requests for \$4 million for preliminary work on an emergency Devils Lake outlet during its consideration of the Energy and Water Appropriations bill. The full Senate has yet to act on it. The Dakota Water Resources Act (DWRA), which would modernize the Garrison project and address other North Dakota water needs is also still pending.
 - ' Minot State University projects: Funding for a national training program for Job Corps training center Supervisors, to be developed by Minot State University (MSU), and funds for MSU to study and develop systems to meet unique needs of rural Americans with disabilities have been approved by the full Senate, but final action by House-Senate conference committees is still needed. Awaiting full Senate action is \$1 million for the operation of the Rural Law Enforcement Training Program at MSU, funding Dorgan secured as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

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